

Applic. No. 10/776,361
Amdt. dated August 22, 2005
Reply to Office action of May 25, 2005

Remarks/Arguments:

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1-4 remain in the application. Claims 1 and 3 have been amended.

In item 1 on page 2 of the above-identified Office action, claims 1-4 have been rejected as being indefinite under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

More specifically, the Examiner has stated that in claims 1 and 2-4 there is insufficient antecedent basis for the term "said suction belt". Claims 1 and 3 have been amended to even further clarify that the "said suction belt" is the least one suction belt. Therefore, the rejection is believed to have been overcome.

The Examiner has stated that it is unclear from the language of claim 1 as to whether the covering plate is the feed table or a new element. Claim 3 has been amended to further clarify that the cover plate is a part of the feed table. Therefore, the rejection is believed to have been overcome.

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It is accordingly believed that the claims meet the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112, first and second paragraphs. Should the Examiner find any further objectionable items, counsel would appreciate a telephone call during which the matter may be resolved. The above-noted changes to the claims are provided solely for cosmetic or clarificatory reasons. The changes are not provided for overcoming the prior art nor for any reason related to the statutory requirements for a patent.

In item 2 on page 2 of the Office action, claims 1-4 have been rejected as being fully anticipated by Eitel et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,133,543) (hereinafter "Eitel") under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

As will be explained below, it is believed that the claims were patentable over the cited art in their original form and the claims have, therefore, not been amended to overcome the references.

Before discussing the prior art in detail, it is believed that a brief review of the invention as claimed, would be helpful.

Claim 1 calls for, *inter alia*:

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the at least one suction belt having at least two mutually spaced-apart rows of suction openings formed therein, and the feed table having ventilation openings formed therein in a region between the rows of suction openings formed in the at least one suction belt.

The Eitel reference discloses a sheet conveying apparatus for conveying sheets via two conveyor belts (4). A table (1) includes compensation bore holes (61 and 62) provided between the conveyor belts (4). The compensation bore holes (61 and 62) are in contact with atmospheric pressure on the underside of the table (1) and function to reduce or avoid the negative low pressure (suction) below the sheet to be transported (column 7, lines 32-52). Accordingly, Eitel discloses that the compensation bore holes are in direct contact with the sheets to be transported and are not disposed between the rows of suction openings. This is contrary to the present invention as claimed in which the ventilation openings are in contact with the lower side of the conveyor belt ("the feed table having ventilation openings formed therein in a region between the rows of suction openings formed in the at least one suction belt").

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's comments on page 5 of the Office action, that claim 1 does not recite

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that "the ventilation openings are in contact with the lower side of the conveyor belt." Claim 1 recites that the "at least one suction belt is disposed to be guided over said feed table", "said at least one suction belt having two mutually spaced-apart rows of suction openings", and that "said feed table having ventilation openings formed therein in a region between said rows of suction openings". Accordingly, because the suction belt is disposed to be guided over the feed table and the ventilation openings are in the feed table between the rows of suction openings in a single belt, the ventilation openings must be in contact with the at least one suction belt. Therefore, it is respectfully believed that the Examiner's comments that claim 1 does not recite the limitation that "the ventilation openings are in contact with the lower side of the conveyor belt", is incorrect.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's comments on page 6 of the Office action that the limitation that "the compensation bore holes are disposed between suction opening of one conveyor belt", is not included in claims 1-4. Claim 1 recites that the at least one suction belt has at least two mutually spaced-apart rows of suction openings formed therein and that the feed table has ventilation openings formed therein in a region between the rows of suction openings." Accordingly, the ventilation openings formed in the feed belt

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must be disposed between the rows of suction openings in a single belt. Therefore, the limitation that the ventilation bore holes are disposed between the rows of suction openings in a single belt is included in claim 1. Thus, it is respectfully believed that the Examiner's comments are not accurate.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's remarks in the penultimate paragraph on page 6 of the Office action, which lead to his conclusion that "the Eitel patent discloses arrangements of suction openings (7) in belts (4 and 4) and ventilation openings (61 and 62) that meet the limitations as set forth in claims 1-4." While the limitation of at least one suction belt can refer to a plurality of suction belts, each of any plurality of suction belts must include two mutually spaced rows of suction openings. This is not the case in Eitel, which discloses two belts, each one having one row of suction openings (this is supported by the fact that the Examiner refers to two belts "(4 and 4)" to come up with the two rows of suction openings). Accordingly, it is respectfully believed that the Examiner is in error. Therefore, it is believed that the Eitel reference does not meet the limitations as set forth in claims 1-4.

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The reference does not show the at least one suction belt having at least two mutually spaced-apart rows of suction openings formed therein, and the feed table having ventilation openings formed therein in a region between the rows of suction openings formed in the at least one suction belt, as recited in claim 1 of the instant application. The limitation of claim 1 requires that ventilation holes in the feed table be underneath and contact with the lower side of the suction belt, because the ventilation holes are between rows of suction holes in a single belt. The Eitel reference discloses two conveyor belts each having a respective row of suction openings and that the table has compensation bore holes disposed between the two separate conveyor belts. Eitel does not disclose that the compensation bore holes are disposed between mutually spaced rows of suction openings in one conveyor belt. This is contrary to the invention of the instant application as claimed, in which the at least one suction belt has at least two mutually spaced-apart rows of suction openings formed therein, and the feed table has ventilation openings formed therein in a region between the rows of suction openings formed in the at least one suction belt.

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Since claim 1 is believed to be allowable over Eitel,
dependent claims 2-4 are believed to be allowable over Eitel
as well.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claim 1. Claim 1 is, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art and since all of the dependent claims are ultimately dependent on claim 1, they are believed to be patentable as well.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-4 are solicited.

In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel respectfully requests a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out.

If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made.

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Please charge any other fees which might be due with respect
to Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the Deposit Account of Lerner &
Greenberg P.A., No. 12-1099.

Respectfully submitted,



For Applicant(s)

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August 22, 2005

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